

an optical fiber having a proximal end and a distal end;

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concl.
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a tapered reinforcing tube bonded to said optical fiber, said optical fiber extending therethrough, the reinforcing tube having a thickness that varies over the length of the reinforcing tube; and

a reinforcing braid attached over said optical fiber and over a distal portion of said reinforcing tube.

20. (Amended) A method of constructing a variable stiffness optical fiber shaft comprising the steps of:

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providing an optical fiber, said optical fiber having a proximal end and a distal end;

bonding a tapered reinforcing tube to a proximal portion of said optical fiber, said

5 optical fiber extending through said reinforcing tube, the reinforcing tube having a thickness varying over the length of the reinforcing tube; and

applying a reinforcing braid over a middle to distal portion of said optical fiber.
